

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE NEW ZEALAND
NEWS MEDIA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Science in Psychology
in the
University of Canterbury

by

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University of Canterbury

1978

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Dr B.G. Stacey and Mr B.D. Jamieson for their supervision of this thesis. Thanks are also due to Stephen Maharey for kindly permitting the use of his data, and to Mrs van der Goot for her invaluable assistance in the preparation of the final draft.

ABSTRACT

A content analysis was performed upon items of industrial relations news from eight daily newspapers, three daily radio news programmes, and four daily television newscasts, over a period of two weeks in 1977. The analysis examined in detail the amount of coverage given to industrial relations, and the types of industrial relations events and issues which were presented as news. Also examined were the types of people and groups presented by the news media as being involved in industrial relations, and the particular manner of that presentation. From the results, patterns in the way the news media present industrial relations emerged that suggest that there are characteristic tendencies in the news media's portrayal of occupational life. These patterns were observed to be reasonably constant across all newspapers and programmes. The thesis closes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In view of the recognised ability of the mass media to shape public consciousness with regard to a wide range of social issues, it is surprising to note that the treatment afforded the important area of employer-employee relations has been the subject of very little research to date. This is perhaps even more surprising when one considers that public attitudes and perceptions in this area may come to have a very real effect on industrial relations processes, by virtue of their translation, through what may be loosely described as the democratic process, into concrete government policy. In a country where state involvement in industrial relations is a good deal higher than in many western democracies, this policy in turn, by its incorporation into the statutory controls exerted on industrial relations, becomes a major determinant of the nature of ongoing relations, comprising the framework within which parties to such processes must operate.

Despite this, the author notes the existence of only one previous attempt at an investigation of the type of information reaching the New Zealand public on indus-

trial relations from the news media. This takes the form of an unpublished research report by Maharey (1977), and, in that it examines only a small sample of press coverage of industrial relations, does not really constitute a full investigation of this aspect of the news media's output. This thesis is an attempt to investigate in greater depth the type of industrial relations news presented by major press, radio and television news outlets in this country.

The following Chapter examines previous study, both empirical and theoretical, relating to this area. This is followed by a presentation of the aims and the method adopted in the present research. The results, which are presented in Chapter four, are discussed in Chapter five. Conclusions are presented in Chapter six. The report closes with a Bibliography and Appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE

This chapter provides a background to the present study by means of a review of past studies of the news media's coverage of industrial relations. Empirical studies are first discussed and, as most of the existing empirical literature centres upon the news media's reporting of industrial conflict, particular attention is given to this area. The chapter concludes with a review of theoretical explanations which have been advanced for the ways in which the news media present this type of news.

2.1 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The empirical literature on industrial relations news is reviewed here, under a number of sub-headings corresponding to several discrete bodies of research findings.

2.1.1 Amount of Coverage of Industrial Relations

In general, it appears that the overall amount of industrial relations news-appearing in the media is a function of available space in each medium. Hartmann (1976), in what is perhaps the most comprehensive empirical

study of this type of news to date, investigated the industrial relations news content of five daily newspapers, two daily television newscasts, and one radio news programme, over a period of eight weeks. He found that the largest newspapers carried the most of this type of news, and the broadcasting media the least of all. Expressed as a percentage of total available space, newspapers devoted on average between one and two per cent of their total content to this type of news. These figures would have been higher had measures of total content not included advertising copy. By comparison, the two television channels averaged four and six per cent respectively, and the radio news averaged nine per cent of its total content. It is possible, suggested Hartmann, that these higher percentage content figures for the broadcasting media are an indication of the importance or 'news value' attached to industrial relations by media professionals. Because of severe time restrictions operating in such media, it is suggested that broadcasting editors have to select their content much more stringently than their press counterparts, including only those items of news they consider to be particularly important or interesting. Thus, Hartmann concluded that industrial relations was prominent among what was considered important during the period covered by the analysis. The observation that, over the eight weeks of the study, the four major newspapers produced no fewer than 41 editorials on industrial relations topics serves to support this

conclusion.

Figures showing the average daily industrial relations contents for both the press and the broadcasting media indicate that even the most casual of readers or listeners is likely to come into contact with at least some industrial relations news on any given day. Hartmann found that there was a daily average of 156 column inches of industrial relations news in the press, and 199 seconds in the broadcasting media. Maharey (1977) has partially replicated Hartmann's study in a New Zealand context, using four major metropolitan daily newspapers. These four newspapers together produced an average of 212 column inches of industrial relations news daily. It is worth noting that both of these figures for the press represent more than a complete page of news.

2.1.2 The Subject Matter of Industrial Relations News

Writers in the field of mass-media research have often noted that certain types of event or subject matter are more likely than others to become news. Hartmann (1976) examined this proposition in the context of industrial relations news by coding news items according to their main topic of subject matter. It was found that the frequency with which certain types of subject matter formed the main focus of industrial relations news was remarkably similar for all papers and programmes studied. This similarity held in spite of real differences in political orientations, and the types of audience for which the

various media were specifically catering. A similar correspondence between patterns of attention to subject matter was observed by Maharey (1977) in his study of New Zealand newspapers.

In the Hartmann study, by far the largest group of items fell within a category of subject matter labelled 'Industrial Action'. These were items relating to instances of strike action, lock-outs, go-slows, work-to-rules, and all other forms of overt industrial action. This category alone accounted for 43% of all items of industrial relations news, with the majority being reports of strike action. In Maharey's study, this figure was considerably higher, with 55.7% of items falling within this category, over three times the number in any other category of subject matter. Hartmann further found that approximately one-quarter of these items were straight-forward reports or comments on ongoing action. A further five per cent concerned negotiations over ongoing action, and 15% stressed the effects of the ongoing action. Fifteen per cent of all items in this category were reports of returns to work or the ending of action. Correspondingly, only 26% of reports of industrial action were about impending action, with approximately half of these relating to negotiations or statements on impending action. Similar results were obtained by Maharey (1977).

Several studies have examined this facet of the media's presentation of industrial relations news in more detail, looking at the particular manner in which the news

media signify industrial conflict. The Glasgow Media Group (1976) compared U.K. Department of Employment statistics on strikes with the number of television news items dealing with this type of industrial action. It was found that television news tended to emphasize strikes in some areas and completely ignore them in others, seemingly shifting their attention from one dispute to another without reason or regard to their continuance. Furthermore, it was found that news reports rarely stated whether or not a strike was official, and that unions involved were rarely named. Also worthy of note was the finding that television news did not cover all those disputes deemed significant by the Department of Employment. Looking at causal explanations for disputes given in the news, it was found that, though both the Government and the Department of Employment had a variety of causal explanations for such events, these seldom appeared on the screen. Rather, the Group suggested the reason for most disputes was assumed to be 'money', despite the existence of readily available statistics showing that up to one-third of all industrial disputes concern non-monetary matters. Related to this, the researchers noted that television news generally indicated a 'spurious causality' between wage demands and inflation, despite much academic evidence that wage rises typically contribute only around one-third to any price rise. In the light of frequent audience research findings that television news is widely regarded as the most trustworthy

of news sources, the Group conclude that their findings are a matter for regret.

The superficiality of the news media's causal analysis of industrial disputes was also noted by Hartmann (1976). In line with the Glasgow Media Group's findings, he found that the most frequently stated reason for industrial action, appearing in 40% of such items, was dissatisfaction with wages. Opposition to the Government's incomes policy, then a current issue, featured as a 'cause' in 23% items, followed by 'union instructions', given as a reason in 11% of items. Noticeably, in only nine per cent of items on disputes was there any reference to the nature of the work or working conditions as a factor in the dispute. Furthermore, in 16% of items, no cause whatsoever was given for the action. These findings clearly show that the news media tend to signify the causes of industrial unrest primarily in terms of the actions of labour. By comparison, the implications of disputes are seen primarily in terms of how they affect the economics of production and the public or consumer, stressing the disruptive effects of such action. The most commonly stated effect, Hartmann found, was a 'non-specific reference to some kind of disruption or reduction in efficiency of the enterprise', featuring in 32% of items. A more specific reference to a loss in production appeared in 19% of items, followed by lay-offs of workers (18% items), and inconvenience or danger to the public or consumer (17% items). Eighteen per cent of

items listed no effects at all. On average there was found to be just over one cause and one effect per item, though Hartmann states that, in general, more attention appeared to be given to effects rather than causes of disputes. The most remarkable facet of the news media's analyses of the causes and effects of industrial action, finds Hartman, was the very limited range of factors referred to and the superficiality of the analysis given.

In general, these findings are in line with Hyman's (1972) observation:

"The mass media do not purport, for the most part, to provide a detailed and systematic analysis of the social phenomena which they report One consequence of this is that what is socially distributed as news is typically characterised by superficiality, trivialisation, and sensationalism."¹

Perhaps the most detailed analysis of the news media's presentation of industrial conflict to date is that undertaken by Morley (1973). In this study, reports of industrial action taken from 68 television news and current affairs programmes were examined for 'recurrent patterns and orientations' in the way such events were reported. The central finding of this investigation was that, in this type of news, the media trade in concepts and definitions that are "profoundly ideological."² It was found that industrial conflict was signified within what Philo and Hewitt (1976) have termed an 'ideological

¹ p. 146.

² See Hyman Op. Cit. p. 153.

framework of consensus'. This view, states Morley, assumes that society is basically equitable (i.e. lacks structural conflicts of interest), and that there is a unique 'National Interest' which is shared by all members of the community. The key implication in this unitary view of society is that people must co-operate and work together if the 'National Interest', which is equated with the good of all, is to be served.³ Within this ideological framework, Morley found that trade unions were generally presented in their involvement in disputes as 'sectionally-minded interest groups', whose sole motivation was a selfish concern for those sectional interests, regardless of the 'National Interest'. This sectionalism in turn was found to be highlighted in the coverage of inter-union aspects of disputes. By comparison, the State (the employer in most of the disputes reported during the period of the analysis) was presented as being concerned mainly for the 'National Interest' and for public welfare. This observation is perhaps not surprising when one considers that the view that there exists a shared 'National Interest' in essence sees the interests of those who control society as those of society as a whole. Thus, the predominant image of the State, in its involvement in disputes, is as

³ For an in-depth discussion of the 'Unitary Ideology' as it applies to industrial relations, see Fox (1971) and Deekes (1977).

the representative and defender of the 'National Interest' and of the rule of law. It was also found that once a dispute is in progress, the State's role was additionally defined as the non-technocratic task of obtaining the resumption of normal working relations as quickly as possible.

As in the Glasgow Media Group's study, the media in Morley's study were found to portray a certain image of the price/wage system. While price rises were presented as merely 'happening', wage claims were presented as being actively 'made'. Thus, while those demanding wage increases are required to justify those demands and to present a 'good case', price rises are justified by the media in terms of a need to maintain profit levels, which are seen as being in the 'National Interest'. As Toynbee (1967) comments, there is a tendency on the part of the media to signify the industrialist who produces a great deal as not only an efficient manufacturer, but also as a benefactor of the country. Trade unions, finds Morley, are generally presented as the sole active and responsible agents in dispute situations, their actions and decisions being portrayed as the only reason for the existence of the dispute. Correspondingly, the authorities are usually presented as being 'helpless' in the face of the unions' actions and decisions.

Part of this shallowness in the media's causal analysis of disputes is described by Morley in terms of an 'event orientation' on the part of the media, which in

turn leads to the presentation of 'actuality without context'. He states:

"The coverage tends to focus on the immediate form of events, on what happened and who was involved, and to ignore the underlying context of the situation, rarely offering any analysis of the relationship between particular events and underlying structural processes."⁴

As a result, disputes come to be signified primarily in terms of the immediate issues, such as the form of the action, and its immediate implications. Thus, Morley found that strikes were signified by the media primarily in terms of the disruption that they cause. This is particularly apparent in headlines, which is an important consideration, in the light of Tannenbaum's (1953) finding that headlines act as a frame of reference within which the facts of the story are perceived, thus giving the news its primary meaning.

Philo and Hewitt (1976) comment that, within the ideological framework of consensus consistently utilised by the media, there is a limited range of explanations possible for the existence of conflict. As Hyman (1972) suggests, if the structure of society is seen as basically equitable, then conflict must be the result of either subversion or ignorance. Morley identifies two fundamental approaches utilised by the media to explain the existence of conflict in industry. Firstly disputes

⁴ p. 15.

are seen as the result of a militant minority urging a moderate majority to action. Thus, "strikes, militancy and unrest are caused by a small minority of politically motivated people who are misusing positions of power and authority to mislead the majority."⁵ The second explanation sees industrial conflict in terms of the adoption of unreasonable attitudes. Disputes are seen to result from people being 'intransigent' or 'unwilling to compromise', and militancy is equated with anger. Correspondingly, the solution to the dispute is seen as the need for both parties to adopt more reasonable and conciliatory attitudes. Philo and Hewitt feel that this limited range of explanations amounts, in effect, to blaming the workforce. In this regard, they identify an additional frequently appearing explanation for crisis, which sees disputes as the result of "overpaid workers who are lazy, produce shoddy goods, and are strike prone." Morley found that the limits of acceptable protest in industrial life are clearly defined by the media, and that strikes were consistently portrayed as being outside those limits, and as an irrational response to crisis. Thus it was found that the media often draw attention to the pettiness of the causes of disputes, and, once a dispute is in progress, to the 'irrationality' of the form of the action. Further, at times of crisis, the media were found to stress the 'immorality' of strikes,

⁵ Philo and Hewitt (1976) p. 17.

as the non-British way to behave. Strikers were seen to have moral obligations to the community at large to maintain the flow of goods and services. Morley noted that, as a counterpoint to the perceived immorality of striking workers, coverage often stressed the dedication and responsibility of those who had remained at their jobs.

Such ill-concealed hostility towards strike action and strikers was also observed by Lane and Roberts (1971) in their case study of an unofficial strike of glass-workers. They commented that:

"... despite the leanings of some reporters, despite the editorial policies of the different papers, all of the press without exception managed to convey the impression that the whole thing was rather lamentable."⁶

Despite obvious attempts at neutrality on the part of the press, they concluded that strikes are always regarded as a matter for regret, are never written about from the point of view of the striker, and that the most the striking worker can hope for is a brand of 'strained neutrality'.

Morley's analysis found that the media see adherence to the social values of responsibility, moderation, negotiation, and compromise as the 'rational' way to settle differences. Thus, states Morley, the media always assume that it is reasoned argument, not show of force, that settles disputes.

Finally, Morley found that the media tended to

⁶ pp. 75-76.

define their role in the context of disputes as representing the public against the sectional interests of unions and employers. This in turn is seen to be part of the reason why coverage tends to focus on the implications of a dispute, while ignoring the basic issues at stake.

While the majority of industrial relations news almost certainly concerns industrial action, patterns in the news media's attention to other types of related subject matter are also worthy of note. Hartman (1976) found that the second largest category of subject matter contained items reporting the actions and statements of unions and their officials (excluding those to do with industrial action), and accounted for 20.1% of all items. Such items occurred eight times more frequently than those relating to the actions and statements of employers and their associations (2.4% items). Maharey (1977) found similar patterns of coverage in the New Zealand press. Bearing in mind that the State is becoming increasingly involved in industrial relations as an employer, it is worth considering here that the actions and statements of government, politicians, and parties formed the main subject matter of 6.9% of items in the Hartmann study, and a slightly higher 9.8% in Maharey's investigation. However, even if one considered that the State appears in its role as an employer in all of these cases, the actions and statements

of unions and their officials would still appear in the news more frequently, in both cases.

A study by Sussmann (1944) may help to shed some light on the particular manner in which the news media signify the actions and statements of organised labour. She looked at the nature of 'labour news', as it appeared in a sample of 655 network radio news broadcasts in the USA. Labour news was defined as those news items dealing with "labour in general, all labour groups from local unions to national organisations, any labour leader or policy, and any government action concerning labour."⁷ While this definition would draw in items other than those classified by Hartmann as 'Union Actions and Statements', it is to be expected that all items so classified by Hartmann would fall within Sussmann's definition of 'labour news'. Many of Sussmann's findings must be treated with caution owing to the fact that the study was conducted during war-time, but there are several which are worthy of note here. She coded items according to whether they addressed themselves to the 'morality' or 'strength/weakness' of labour's activities. It was found that there were three times as many 'morality' items as 'strength/weakness' items. In other words, much more attention was given to labour in terms of whether their activities were right or wrong, in the moral sense, than whether those activities were likely to be successful or

⁷ p. 208.

not. With additional coding, it was found that labour was presented as being morally wrong in a situation five times as often as morally right. In contrast, they were presented as being 'strong' just as often as 'weak'. Furthermore, coding items according to whether they were based upon "fact, opinion, or quoted opinion," Sussmann found that factual type reports were nearly always about something morally wrong that labour or a labour leader had done. Both opinion (as expressed by commentator) and quoted opinion were nearly always unfavourable to labour. Finally, while anti-labour quotations were found to emanate from a wide cross-section of the community, pro-labour quotations were found to come almost solely from Labour leaders.

2.1.3 Participants and Spokesmen in Industrial Relations News

Hartmann (1976) coded all items of industrial relations news according to the types of participants and spokesmen appearing therein. He found that 'workers' appeared most frequently, featuring in 84% of items. Unions appeared in 68% of items, the TUC or trade union movement in 30%, and shopstewards in 12% of items. By comparison, employers or managers of specific enterprises appeared in a modest 47% of items, followed by 'employers in general' (11%), and employers' associations (10%). The government featured as a participant in 46% of items. Maharey (1977) has found similar results for the New

Zealand press, though, in this case, the government was the most frequent participant. This perhaps reflects the large extent to which the government is involved in industrial relations in this country. However, despite this latter finding, it is clear from both studies that labour and its organisations appear far more frequently in the news than employers, their associations, state bodies involved in industrial relations, and the general public. This, in combination with patterns in the coverage of the different types of subject matter, suggests Hartmann, means that industrial relations is presented by the news media as being 'overwhelmingly' to do with the actions of workers and their representatives.

Hartmann also kept a record of the number of times a participant type was quoted, either directly or indirectly. Trade union officials were most often quoted (36% items), compared with employers (17%), the TUC (8%), individual workers (8%), and government (7%). Where news items were actually 'hung' on a statement, statements originating from union officials and the TUC were found to make news 50% more often than those coming from employers, their associations, and the government combined. Maharey, on the other hand, found that statements from government were the basis of news items over 25% more often than those of union groups.

Finally, Hartmann noted that there were clear differences both in the frequencies with which the news

media characterise participants by the use of adjectives, and in the types of adjective applied. Workers were most often thus characterised (on 43% of the occasions in which they appeared). Trade unions, their officials, and the TUC were next (22% of occasions), followed by all employer groups who were characterised on a mere 7% of occasions. The adjectives most often used, and how often, are shown below:

Workers - Low-paid (61 times), Militant (55),
 Angry (38), Divided (22),
 Moderate (11).

Unions and TUC - Militant (40), Divided (16),
 Angry (15).

Employers and Government - Confident, Firm, Tough.
 (Frequencies not given).

Hartmann also noted that the term 'Moderate', as applied to workers, was usually applied in the context of contrasting 'Moderates' with 'Militants'.

2.2.4 Summary

To summarise, in general terms, on these empirical findings, it appears that the vast majority of industrial relations news concerns industrial action, usually strike action. The media tend to signify such action in largely negative terms, coverage centering on the immediate form of the action and its implications, and ignoring the basic issues at stake and the whole background to the dispute. Strikes are thus presented as irrational and

immoral forms of behaviour, causing disruption for little apparent reason. Furthermore, industrial relations is presented in the news as being overwhelmingly concerned with the actions of workers and their representatives. By comparison, employers and their associations rarely appear in an industrial relations context. Finally, there appear to be clear differences in the ways the various parties to industrial relations are described by the media, with negative characteristics being more frequently applied to labour and its organisations.

2.3 THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

There have been a number of attempts to place the empirical findings within a more general explanatory framework. The following discussion deals with these theoretical explanations.

The observation that the news media tend to focus upon instances of overt industrial conflict when reporting industrial relations was commented on as long ago as 1922 by Walter Lippmann. He saw this tendency, in part, as a function of the sheer observability of events such as the strike. Much of industrial relations, he pointed out, takes the form of an 'unseen struggle'. the immediate realities of which are outside the direct experience of most media professionals and the general public. Conditions in an industry may be bad, and the discontent of

the workforce great, but these facts are simply not generally visible. Failing the collapse of industrial relations into overt action in the form of a strike or lockout, the underlying 'facts' do not become visible to the news media. Thus it is that many ongoing issues in industrial relations only enter the news in terms of the overt industrial action they engender. In the case of the strike, Kornhauser et al (1954) comment that one consequence of the visibility of such action is that its effects, particularly economic, are exaggerated.

"Probably the basic explanation for this exaggerated view lies in the overtness of the strike. Glaring and palpable, it thrusts itself above the surface of society. Although not the most significant source of economic loss, it certainly is the most conspicuous. The number of workers participating in strikes is roughly of the same order of magnitude as those suffering industrial accidents. The accidents occur quietly, however, generally one by one, whereas strikes are showy mass phenomena. Similarly, strikes are not the only expression of industrial discontent, and probably not the most dangerous, but they are the most spectacular."⁸

On another level, Lippman (1922) suggest that events such as the strike are prominent in the news owing to their perceived 'news value'. As Smith (1970) notes, news is not merely a mirror reflection of 'reality', but

⁸ p. 8.

a selected and processed account of those aspects of a situation to which the news media have ascribed a particular prominence or newsworthiness. High on a list of factors governing the 'news value' of an event or situation is the need to retain audience interest in the coverage and also to facilitate audience understanding of the event. Reports of strikes, suggest Lippmann, enable the audience to call into play a wide range of clearly defined stereotypes about such situations, and about disruption in general, thus injecting both interest and meaning into the report. In contrast, the 'unseen struggle' has none of its own flavour, and for an audience to derive the necessary meaning and interest from coverage that centres on the underlying issues in industrial relations, they are forced to step out of their own direct experience and into completely different lives. Thus, states Lippman, the media tend to let the underlying issues be uncovered by the overt act, and then describe the event as the story of an interference with the life of its audience. Pressure to adhere to this approach is seen to derive from a number of market-type considerations, one of which relates to the economic necessity of interesting the reader quickly, and the economic risk involved in not interesting him at all. Lippmann concludes that, in general, news can be described as an account of overt phases of situations that are interesting.

Several other writers have noted the operation of

journalistic 'news values' as a significant factor in the media's presentation of industrial relations news. In particular, as Blumler and Ewbank (1970) express it:

"Journalists operate, it is said, according to certain widely held assumptions about the kind of news in which readers and viewers are interested. High on the scale of presumed consumer interest are instances of deviations from an accepted norm - situations where some natural or moral order has been violated - and instances of conflict therefore the mass media rivet the attention of the public on strikes and inculcate a tendency to regard their incidence as pernicious, excessive and indicative of the need for firmer controls." ⁹

Halloran et al (1970) see the operation of professional news values stemming from the need to retain audience interest as leading to a coverage of events which draws attention to the 'negative' and 'personality' aspects of a situation. This provides the audience with a simple unambiguous image of the situation, and the opportunity to project onto an identifiable person or group. In industrial relations news, attention is thus drawn to strikes and their consequences and to the involvement of trade unions in such action. Halloran et al also see the publication frequency of the daily media as a factor in determining the type of situations which

⁹ p. 35.

become news. This publication frequency means that events which occur within the publication cycle of one day are more likely to become news than those which develop over a longer period of time. Thus, a union's decision to go out on strike is 'news', while the developments leading to that decision generally occur over too long a time to be visible in the daily media. Halloran et al also note that this 'event orientation' of the daily news media makes certain aspects of a story more newsworthy than others. For example, the issue of how the dispute is going to affect the economics of production, or the public, is predisposed to become the issue in the news as it is directly related to the visible form of the action. They also observe that, by reporting only the simple visible event, the media feel able to claim objectivity and impartiality.

Other explanations that have been forwarded to described the manner in which the news media present industrial relations news centre around the view that selective patterns in the media's coverage imply a particular way of perceiving industrial life, amounting to an interpretative framework within which the flow of information and reporting is organised. These implied views or 'frameworks of meaning', Smith (1970) argues, are unavoidable.

".... news reporters are concerned with the collection of 'facts', the selection and predigestion of inform-

ation, the writing of descriptions of events. The problem lies in that 'facts' do not exist in isolation either from other facts or from wide-ranging sets of assumptions. The 'facts' of news come to us embedded inside the perspectives from which their selection proceeds." ¹⁰

Hartmann (1976) is of the opinion that events, actors, issues and arguments in industrial relations are presented by the news media within an interpretative framework that implies 'differential legitimacy'. He states that the actions of trade unions are generally presented as having less legitimacy than the actions of employers and government. In particular, he notes that industrial action on the part of workers is characteristically presented as lacking legitimacy. Industrial relations news, he argues, is presented by the news media as being mainly to do with the actions of unions and workers. The implication of this is that, because of their dubious legitimacy, such groups warrant closer scrutiny by the media than others. The finding that union officials are quoted most often, in this light may mean that such people are called on by the media to justify actions which are seen as questionable. Hartmann suggests that employers' statements may well appear in the news more often than is immediately apparent, but that they are given as the 'facts' in the situation. If true,

¹⁰ p. 97.

this supports the idea that more legitimacy is attributed to the actions of employers than trade unions. Hartmann observes that the media persistently indicate by their coverage that one of the main consequences of workers' or unions' actions is to go on strike. Such groups are presented as being solely responsible for such action, and thus for the negative consequences that are always seen to flow from strikes. In this way, it is suggested, the label of dubious legitimacy is made to stick.

It is a common view that such interpretative frameworks arise largely from the social, political, and economic situations in which the media are forced to operate. Hall (1973) argues that the media are part of a political and social system that is 'structured in dominance', and are orientated within this framework of power such that the dominance hierarchy is reflected in their content. Thus, it is held that the media signify industrial relations in terms largely predefined by the powerful elites in society. Although required to be impartial, balanced and objective in their coverage, Hall states that the terms and limits of the coverage are still essentially those set by the powerful, not the powerless, in society. Thus, for working class organisations, presenting their case in the media consists in essence of doing so on ground pre-established by those whose dominance they are, in effect, seeking to oppose.

Nedzynski (1973) labels this as the 'media problem' for working class organisations. He states that, despite

almost universal claims by the Western media to impartiality of coverage and 'freedom from control, such claims are misleading, for, in reality, the media are a part of, and essential to the maintenance of, the 'status quo':

"The absolute right to freedom of expression is unchallenged, but it is mitigated by the very real economic and political pressures of these societies; in this context, the free expression of ideas and attitudes means primarily the free expression of ideas and attitudes that are helpful to the prevailing system of power and privilege." ¹¹

Thus the media fulfil a 'functional role' as an expression of the system of dominance, and a means of reinforcing it. Smith (1970) reaches similar conclusions, commenting that news invariably creates within a media organisation a kind of model of the entire political environment in which it is operating, and that the influences which shape that model are fed into the programmes which ensue.

Nedzynski identifies three forces in the political and economic environment of the media which, he feels, help to bring about this state of affairs. The first of these concerns the ownership and control of the media. He notes that much of the mass media are owned privately, and are thus part of the private sector which is dominated by large scale enterprise. The views of those who own and control the mass media, he states, are most likely to be

¹¹ Nedzynski (1973) p. 415.

soundly conservative, and this is likely to have an effect at editorial level, however unspoken these views are. Secondly, the media are dependent upon advertising revenue. This source of income, it is suggested, is often vital to the survival of the media, especially newspapers, and this leads to a tendency on the part of the media to show extreme care when dealing with the business community. The need to accommodate these powerful and vested interests, states Nedzynski, will always exceed the need to accommodate the interests of those who have no lucrative advertising contracts to offer (i.e. Trade unions). The third force is seen to arise at government level. Publicly owned media are the most susceptible to governmental pressure, but, in that they are also dependent on government for a large amount of information, so are the privately owned media.

It can be seen from the preceding review that there has been a very limited range of theoretical explanations forwarded in the context of the media's presentation of industrial relations news. Although this is not surprising considering the small amount of empirical research in the area, the wealth of theoretical literature on the mass media and news in general suggests that much more could be done in this respect.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3.1 AIM

The aim of this investigation is to analyse, in detailed and quantitative terms, the content of industrial relations news as presented by a sub-section of the New Zealand daily news media. The analysis is directed at the amount and type of industrial relations news appearing in the New Zealand news media, and the manner in which it is presented. It also seeks to examine the types of person or groups who appear in this type of news, and the context in which they are reported. The study is exploratory in nature, rather than hypothesis testing. Although the research literature did suggest several areas in which hypotheses might have been developed, it was felt that there exist marked social and industrial differences between this country and Great Britain, whence the majority of study has emerged. These differences were seen to warrant the exploratory approach.

In a broader sense, this study is aimed at determining the character of industrial relations news as it is presented by the New Zealand media, and thus the

nature of the input to media-derived public perceptions of industrial relations and the parties involved in it.

3.2 SAMPLE

The following section describes the selection of news items for analysis.

3.2.1 Media Sample

As the majority of public exposure to news events occurs via television, newspapers and radio, a sample of daily news outlets from these three media was selected to form the basis of this investigation. In order to enable valid observations to be made concerning the type of industrial relations news to which New Zealanders are exposed, it was decided to sample those outlets which reach as large an audience as possible. Thus, papers and programmes were selected for study mainly on the basis of audience size.

(a) Newspapers.

As there are no national daily newspapers in New Zealand, it was decided to sample a spread of the largest circulation metropolitan dailies from around the country. It should be noted, however, that many of the larger metropolitan newspapers have substantial out of town circulations. The sample thus contained two large

circulation newspapers from each of the four main centres.

<u>CITY</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>CIRCULATION</u> ¹
Auckland	The New Zealand Herald	233,500
	The Auckland Star	130,500
Wellington	The Dominion	72,500
	The Evening Post	98,700
Christchurch	The Press	74,000
	The Christchurch Star	68,400
Dunedin	The Otago Daily Times	44,500
	The Evening Star	30,000

The total circulation covered by the newspaper sample is 752,100.

(b) Television

New Zealand possesses two television channels with near national coverage, and therefore reaching extremely large audiences. On the basis of figures supplied by the Broadcasting Council of New Zealand, the two daily newscasts with the highest audience ratings were selected from each channel.

¹ Circulation figures obtained from offices of the newspapers concerned.

<u>CHANNEL</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUDIENCE</u> ²
Television One	Six-thirty News	833,000
	Mid-evening News	681,000
Television Two	First Edition	328,000
	Late Edition	252,000

(c) Radio.

The 1976 Comnet Radio Report indicates that the stations with the largest audiences are the Radio New Zealand Community Network stations, followed by privately-owned radio, and then the Radio New Zealand National Programme. It was decided not to include Community Network stations in the sample, owing to the extremely brief nature of items included in its news reports. The National Programme, on the other hand, provides several nationally broadcast reports of up to an hour's duration per day, and which contain news items of considerable length. Furthermore, both the National Programme and the main part of the Community Network news reports emanate from the same central newsroom. Thus, it was decided to opt for the inclusion of the more substantial National Programme news programmes in the sample. Two of these were chosen for analysis. 'Morning Report' (7.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.) is broadcast during peak listening hours (from 1976 Comnet Report),

² Audience over 10 years, supplied by New Zealand Broadcasting Council.

and contains a large amount of in-depth news reporting. 'Evening Report' (6.00 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.) lacks the large audience of 'Morning Report', but was included so that events occurring during the day would be covered by the analysis.

As an afterthought, it was decided to include an example of a privately owned radio station news report, to see how the presentation of industrial relations news in this popular medium differs from that on the Broadcasting Corporation controlled networks. Radio Avon, a local privately owned station was deemed by the 1976 Comnet Radio Report to have the largest share of the Christchurch radio audience at any given point in time, with a peak rating at 7.30 a.m. The final sample of radio news programmes is given below:

<u>STATION</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUDIENCE</u> ³
National Programme	'Morning Report'	135-184,000
	'Evening Report'	17-19,000
Radio Avon	7.30 a.m. News	51,000

3.2.2 Issues Sample

The aim was to select a contiguous sample of issues of each paper and programme, hopefully covering a period of time in which there would occur no event on the industrial relations scene that could be described as

³ Audience over 10 years, from 1976 Comnet Radio Report.

other than 'usual'. It was felt that the presence of such an event during the sample period might substantially alter the nature of coverage typically given to industrial relations. It was found necessary to exclude Saturday and Sunday issues from the sample, for a number of reasons. First, there is no 'Morning Report' or 'Evening Report' over the weekend. Second, none of the daily newspapers publish on a Sunday. Third, for both television and radio, audience habits during the weekend differ markedly from those during the week, with substantial shifts in peak viewing and listening times. Finally, given the resources available to the researcher, there were technical difficulties involved in recording television newscasts between Friday night and Monday morning.

Issues were initially collected during two months in February and March 1977, and an appropriate number then selected from this larger sample. It was found that a ten day sample of consecutive issues, March 7th - 18th inclusive, suited the requirements of this investigation.

(a) Sample Period.

As has been stated, the sample of issues was taken during what was felt to be a relatively typical run of industrial relations events. It is, of course, impossible to ensure that events reported in this sample are wholly representative of industrial relations events, owing

to the highly variable nature of such events. However, the sample is typical in the sense that it represents ten days reporting of industrial relations, without any apparent influence resulting from extraordinary events. The major single event around this time was the announcement of a six per cent General Wage Order on March 3rd, and it was found that media examinations of this event had concluded by March 7th, with very little subsequent reference being made to it. The sample period saw the Combined State Services Organisation negotiating with the Government for a wages and salary adjustment, the sitting of a commission of inquiry into the heavy engineering industry, and talks between the Government and the Freezing Workers Unions on problems within the industry. It should perhaps be noted that industry at this stage was still operating under the 10th Amendment to the Wages Adjustment Regulations (1974), which had frozen wages and salaries, other than in exceptional circumstances. There was also a price and rent freeze in operation. Towards the end of the sample period, parties began to talk about a possible return to free wage bargaining between unions and employers, and the possibility of this happening in the near future may have acted as a stabilising influence on industrial relations throughout the whole country. Certainly those unions already involved in wages disputes carried on this process, but the possibility of an imminent return to free collective bargaining may have caused many unions to wait and see how

things progressed in this area.

3.2.3 Item Selection

With the sample of issues decided, the actual content to be analysed within that sample was specified. As in Hartmann's (1976) study, it was decided that the analysis would be performed upon 'items of industrial relations news'. and the same definition was used to select such items from the main body of news:

"For an item to qualify for inclusion, the activities of trade unions, or employers' associations, or employer-employee relations need to form an explicit and substantive part of its subject matter."⁴

In using this definition, it was anticipated that there might be some difficulty in deciding whether the 'explicit and substantive' criteria were met, and so this was quantified to mean 50% or more of the item's subject matter. In practice, this difficulty did not arise. It appeared that items were either wholly about industrial relations, or they were not at all. Thus, although it had been decided to discard items that dealt with industrial relations only in passing, no items scanned were of this type.

In accordance with the aims of this investigation, all items concerning events taking place outside New Zealand were excluded, as it was felt that the content of

⁴ Hartmann (1976) p.5.

these items may have been influenced by the processing of overseas media organisations. In his analysis, Hartmann (1976) discarded all items of less than two column inches in length, classing them as filler items. No length criteria were employed in the present study, as it was found that such items (i.e. less than two column inches long) constituted such a large proportion of the New Zealand press's coverage of industrial relations that excluding them could lead to a sampling bias. Furthermore, unlike in the Hartmann research, all pages of the press were scanned for items. New Zealand newspapers are not as regimented in their format as some British newspapers appear to be, and it was felt that important items might be missed by selective scanning. In practice, this policy of total scanning proved worthwhile, as several large items appeared in sections of the press not scanned in Hartmann's study. All items were included if they met the subject matter criteria. This meant inclusion regardless of whether an item was a regular news article, a reader's letter, an editorial, a cartoon, or a feature article. This selection process produced a total of 416 items of industrial relations news for analysis.

3.3 ANALYSIS

The items whose selection is described in the pre-

ceding section of this chapter were then subjected to a content analysis.

3.3.1 Content Analysis

The term content analysis covers a wide range of different analytic techniques, which have in common the fact that they attempt to provide the means for an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content of a communication or series of communications. As the study of the communication process as a whole has been described as the process of determining "who says what, to whom, how, and with what effect"⁵, so content analysis could be described as that subsection of the process that focusses in the main on the 'what' and 'how' components of the communication. In other words, the analysis is directed at the actual content of the transmitted message, and the precise manner in which that content is presented. So diverse are the various techniques grouped together under the title of content analysis that any further attempt at a definition of the technique is not feasible. Likewise, any general review of the different approaches would serve little purpose here, and the reader is referred to Holsti et al (1969) for such a review.

However, for the purpose of this investigation, a distinction should be made between what Eckhardt and

⁵ Lasswell, Lerner and Pool (1952) p. 12.

Ermann (1977) refer to as the quantitative and qualitative aspects of content analysis, termed the 'hard' and 'soft' approaches by Frank (1973). A 'hard' approach typically utilises relatively objective frequency counts of what are considered to be discrete and quantifiable elements of the communication. For example, one might count the number of words or column inches devoted by the press to a particular issue. The main advantage of such an approach lies in its comparative reliability. The coding process is reduced to a counting of clearly defined characteristics and the intrusion of individual coder bias into the analysis may be kept to a minimum. There are, however, many aspects of a communication that cannot be studied using the more quantitative approach. Frank (1973) cites the example of the effect of the overall structure of a news presentation. One cannot study the para-linguistic features of a news report by means of a simple frequency count. Evaluation of the affective content of a communication requires a more 'wholistic' approach. To this end, the 'soft' or more qualitative method uses the experienced judgement of trained coders to evaluate the message with reference to a number of important dimensions or variables. This type of approach was used in Frank's (1973) study of television coverage of the 1972 United States Presidential Election, where coders were given media reports about the various candidates and asked to rate them on a semantic differential scale of

media favourability towards the subject. While covering aspects of a communication that are passed over with the 'hard' approach, it is very difficult with this method to ensure that coders are not evaluating the message according to their own personal predispositions rather than according to its inherent characteristics.

Because industrial relations has been very much in the public eye over the past few years, and because the majority of the New Zealand public might be expected to hold fairly well entrenched views on the subject, it was decided to utilise the more quantitative approach in this study. Another factor involved in this decision was the knowledge that the training of coders in the more evaluative procedures is a very time consuming process, and requires a large number of coders for an acceptable level of reliability to be achieved. The form of the content analysis used in this case is similar to that used by Hartmann (1976), though certain additions and alterations to this basic design have been necessary in order to provide a fuller analysis of this type of news in the New Zealand context. These changes were made following a full examination of the type of industrial relations news appearing in those media selected for study, and with regard to the literature described in the preceding chapter.

3.3.2 Category Formulation

In a well-known review of content analysis tech-

niques, Berelson (1954) has stated that content analysis stands or falls by its categories. Design of these categories constitutes the most difficult and the most important part of an investigation such as this. The analysis will only be productive to the extent that the categories used are well formulated and adapted to the particular problem or content. The set of categories used in this study is described in the following breakdown of the analysis.

(a) Amount of Coverage

This part of the research was aimed at examining the overall amount of industrial relations news appearing in the media. Total amounts of news-space available in each paper and programme were measured, as well as the amount of space given to industrial relations news appearing in the media. Total amounts of news-space available in each paper and programme were measured, as well as the amount of space given to industrial relations news. Data were collected in the form of 'column centimetres' for newspapers and seconds for radio and television. To facilitate comparison between the various media on this factor, measures of total news-space excluded that coverage given to advertising and to weather reports. These latter reports were excluded as television tends to place them outside of the main body of the news. Television One's regional news was also excluded, as it is a locally produced programme that is not broadcast

nationwide, as in the case of the rest of the television news under study.

(b) Subject Matter

Items were coded according to their main topic of subject matter, a process aimed at determining the types of industrial relations events typically reported by the news media. Each item was placed in one of ten subject matter categories shown in Table 1. This category list was felt to adequately cover the range of subject matters reported in the items sampled. It essentially represents a two-level analysis; if an item does not fall into either of categories A or B, then it is placed in one of categories C to J. Coding items with this category list was generally a simple task, though, where difficulty did occur, the item was carefully examined in relation to the question: "What is the main event or subject matter being reported?"

A sub-analysis was carried out on items within each subject matter category, designed to give a fuller description of the content of those items. The form of this analysis was based on an examination of the news items while coding them according to their main topic of subject matter, and is shown in Table 2. Note that in this sub-analysis, items could answer the description provided by one or more categories. This, however, is only the case in the subject matter categories 'Negotiations' and 'Union Action/Statement'. For example, an item may well

Table 1

Description of Categories used in Coding Items according to Subject Matter

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
A. Industrial Action	Items about strikes, strike threats, go slows, stop works, work to rules, and all other forms of industrial action.
B. Negotiations	Items on wage bargaining, arbitration, negotiations on conditions of work, and all negotiations over industrial matters, except where industrial action is taking place or being planned.
C. Economic Context	Items on the cost of living, balance of payments, unemployment and general economics of industry, in which industrial relations forms an explicit and substantive part. Excluding those items dealing with specific instances of industrial action and negotiation.
D. Political Action/ Statements	Items on actions and statements of Government, Politicians and party representatives, excluding those to do with specific instances of industrial action and negotiation.
E. State Agency	Items on the actions and statements of state bodies involved in industrial relations (e.g. Wages Tribunal, Industrial Commission).
F. Union Action/ Statements	Items on the actions and statements of the Trade Union movement, Trade Unions, and their officials, excluding those to do with industrial action or negotiation.
G. Employers' Action/ Statements	Items on the actions and statements of employers or managers of specific enterprises, company directors and employers' associations, other than those to do with industrial action or negotiation.
H. Work and Conditions	Items on the nature of work and conditions in industry in which industrial relations plays a substantive part, including items on health, safety, and hours.
I. Industrial Developments	Items on mergers, redundancies, technical and process changes, where industrial relations forms an explicit and substantive part, but not industrial action relating to these.
J. Others	All items not fitting into the other categories.

Table 2

Within Category Analysis of Subject Matter

<u>Industrial Action</u>	<u>Political Action/Statements</u>
(a) Simple ongoing action. (b) Negotiations over ongoing action. (c) Impending action. (d) Negotiations and statements about impending action. (e) Returns to work. (f) Stressing the effects of the action. (g) Industrial action in general. (h) Past action.	(a) By Government, including National Party. (b) By Opposition, including Labour Party. (c) By others.
<u>Negotiations</u>	<u>State Agency</u>
(a) To do with wages and allowances. (b) To do with conditions of work. (c) Collapse of negotiations, except where industrial action is being specifically planned. (d) Items mentioning favourable progress or successful outcome. (e) Items mentioning the unwillingness of parties to agree or negotiate. (f) Type of negotiations covered: (i) Union-Employer (ii) Union-Government (iii) Employer-Government (iv) Union-Union (v) Employer-Employer (vi) Union-Employer-Government. (g) Items defining situation as a 'stalemate'. (h) Items dealing with the role of a third party in negotiations.	(a) Wage determining state bodies. (b) Others.
<u>Economic Context</u>	<u>Union Action/Statements</u>
(a) Cost of living, buying power of wages. (b) General economic well-being of the country (including items on the balance of payments problem, trade figures, inflationary effects of wages policy). (c) Economic well-being of a particular company. (d) Economic well-being of a particular sector or group in society. (e) Unemployment. (f) An amalgam of the above topics.	(a) Of Federation of Labour or Trade Union Movement. (b) Of Unions. (c) Items to do with rifts and disturbances within the union movement.
	<u>Employer Action/Statements</u>
	No sub-analysis.
	<u>Work and Conditions</u>
	(a) Health and/or safety. (b) Hours. (c) Holidays. (d) Other conditions.
	<u>Industrial Developments</u>
	No sub-analysis.
	<u>Others</u>
	No sub-analysis.

be about negotiations over wages and conditions, or it may well be about the actions and statements of union officials concerning a rift within that union.

(c) Causes and Effects

Items falling within the subject matter category 'Industrial Action' were further analysed in order to determine the kinds of causes and effects the media present as being associated with such action.

Causes. For it to be classed as a cause, a statement had to propose an actual, as opposed to hypothetical, causal relationship between that factor and the industrial action described. A record was kept of every such cause, in the wording in which it had been originally given, and a list of causal categories formulated to cover the range of explanations noted. The list of causal categories used to code items is shown below:

1. Dissatisfaction with pay, wages or allowances.
2. Opposition to employer action or policy.
3. Opposition to government action or policy.
4. Dissatisfaction with working conditions.
5. A simple statement of a failure to agree, or
breakdown in talks.
6. Actions of groups not directly part of the
industrial scene.
7. Instructions given by union.
8. Employer action or statement.

Note that no distinction was made between the origins of these causal explanations of industrial action. Causes were further coded as 'elaborated' or 'unelaborated'. An 'unelaborated' cause was defined as one consisting of a single-sentence statement of causality, while an 'elaborated' cause was defined as one evolving over a number of sentences. A record was also kept of those items in which no cause was given for the reported situation.

Effects. Similarly, those effects presented in the news as the actual, rather than the hypothetical, consequences of the action were recorded and a list of effect categories compiled:

1. Financial loss or hardship to workers and their families.
2. Economic loss or hardship to employers, firms, businesses.
3. Inconvenience to consumers and public.
4. Layoffs and suspensions of workers.
5. Changes in industrial practices.
6. Legal action.
7. General economic effect (e.g. price rises, inflation).
8. Specific reference to a loss in production, and where the disruptive effects of the action are quantified.

9. General reference to the disruptive effects of the action (e.g. works closed, site idle).
10. 'Little or no effect' - where the action is said to have had no great effect.
11. Physical danger to the workforce or public.
12. Government intervention.

A record was kept of those items listing no effects for the reported action, and of those items listing neither cause nor effect.

(d) Participants and Spokesmen

This part of the analysis involved recording the types of participant and spokesman presented by the news media as being involved in industrial relations. A list of participant types was compiled during the early stages of the analysis, and items were coded according to the participant types they featured. The list of participant types was as follows:

1. Workers (individuals and groups).
2. Unions, Union officials, workers' associations and guilds.
3. Employers or managers of specific enterprises.
4. Government, including National Party spokesmen.
5. Federation of Labour or Trade Union Movement.
6. State bodies.
7. Civil Servants.

8. Employers in general.
9. Employers' associations.
10. The Public, man in the street.
11. Opposition, including Labour Party spokesmen.
12. Retailers and their associations.
13. Company directors.
14. Shareholders.
15. Interest and pressure groups.
16. Local bodies and municipal authorities.
17. Experts.
18. Others.

Analysis thus consisted of counting the frequency with which each participant type appeared in the news. Note that each type was checked only once for each item. Thus, if two trade unions, three employers and two government ministers were presented in an item as being involved in an event, the categories (2) Union, (3) Employer and (4) Government would each be checked only the once. In such a way it is possible to determine how wide a cast of characters each medium uses, and whether overall coverage focuses on certain participants as opposed to others. Note was also kept of participant types appearing in newspaper headlines.

Quotations and Interviews. This part of the analysis consisted of recording every time a participant was quoted, either directly or indirectly. Where an interview was given on television or radio, the participant type inter-

viewed was noted, as well as the number of interviews given. Where a news item was 'hung' on a statement, the participant type responsible for that statement was also noted.

Characterisation. For all media, a record was kept of the frequency with which the various participant types had adjectives used to describe them, and of the nature of the adjectives used.

3.4 RELIABILITY

Reliability estimates are an essential part of any content analysis if the results of that analysis are to be at all credible. Berelson (1954) asserts that two types of category reliability are desirable in an analysis of this kind. They are:

- (1) Consistency among coders in assigning items to categories.
- (2) Consistency through time in assigning items to categories.

In this investigation, reliability estimates were obtained in those areas seen as involving the most difficult coding decisions.

3.4.1 Reliability of Subject Matter Coding

Reliability for the process of coding items according to their main topic of subject matter was assessed in only one respect. As only one coder worked

on the data in this study, a simple measure of inter-coder agreement was not possible. In view of this, it was decided to train another psychologist in the use of this coding technique and, once trained to an acceptable level of proficiency, for that person to code a sample of news items. Comparison of the results of this exercise with the results of the original coding would give an indication of the overall reliability of the method. An outline of the training programme and the reliability exercise is presented in Appendix 1.

Limitations of time and money made it impossible to train another coder in all aspects of the analysis. Reliability of the subject matter categorisation was considered critical, and so it was done in this case, but reliability estimates for the rest of the analysis had to be restricted to measures of one coder's consistency over time.

3.4.2 Reliability of Coding of Causes and Effects

This part of the analysis was repeated twelve weeks after the initial coding. In this way, a measure of coder consistency over time was obtained.

3.4.3 Reliability of Coding of Participants and Spokesmen

Although not a process requiring much judgement on the part of the coder, all items were recoded according to the participants and spokesmen featured, some nine weeks after the original exercise.

These areas were those in which a degree of reliability was considered essential. If figures obtained from these reliability estimates were not acceptable, then the results of the analysis would mean little.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 AMOUNT OF COVERAGE

For each paper and programme, the total amount of news-space, and the amount of space devoted to industrial relations news was measured, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

News-space Available and Amount of Industrial Relations
News Appearing in each Paper and Programme

	Total News- Space (c.cm/secs)	Industrial Relations News (c.cm/secs)
N.Z. Herald	68375	1344.0
Auckland Star	74895	1534.5
Dominion	49130	870.3
Evening Post	64422	1123.9
Otago Daily Times	51017	755.6
Evening Star	53422	917.9
The Press	71268	1475.5
Christchurch Star	71683	1717.4
TOTAL	504212	9797.1
Morning Report	33477	1179
Evening Report	13876	1506
TOTAL	47353	2685
Television One	16762	520
Television Two	21842	1630
TOTAL	38604	2150
Radio Avon	3015	309

Table 4 shows industrial relations content expressed as a percentage of the total amounts of news in each paper and programme, along with the average amount of industrial relations news appearing daily in the media.

Table 4
Industrial Relations Content as a Percentage of Total News-space, and Daily Average Industrial Relations Content

	% I.R. News	Av. Daily Content (c.c.m/secs)
N.Z. Herald	2.0	134.5
Auckland Star	2.1	153.5
Dominion	1.8	87.0
Evening Post	1.7	112.4
Otago Daily Times	1.5	77.6
Evening Star	1.7	91.8
The Press	2.1	147.6
Christchurch Star	2.4	171.7
TOTAL	1.9	979.7
Morning Report	3.5	117.9
Evening Report	10.9	150.6
TOTAL	5.7	268.5
Television One	3.1	52.0
Television Two	7.5	163.0
TOTAL	5.6	215.0
Radio Avon	10.3	30.9

In addition, the average lengths of items of industrial relations news were calculated. The average item length for newspapers was found to be 30.6 column centimetres, while radio¹ and television averaged 52.6 seconds and 74.1 seconds respectively. The average item length on Radio Avon was calculated at 18.2 seconds.

4.2 SUBJECT MATTER

Items of industrial relations news were coded into categories according to their main topic of subject matter. Table 5 shows the distribution of items within each category, along with the sum of item lengths within each category.²

Items falling into the various subject matter categories were submitted to further analysis (see Table 2), and the results of this sub-analysis are presented in Table 6. Shown are the number of items answering each descriptive category, and the percentage occurrence of each type of item.

To test for similarities between the various media

¹ 'Radio' henceforward refers solely to the Radio N.Z. programmes.

² Note that 'Main Media' refers to all papers and programmes excepting Radio Avon.

in patterns of attention to the different types of subject matter, a Kendall coefficient of concordance was calculated for the amount of material falling within the various subject matter categories, across all papers and programmes from the main media. This yielded a coefficient of 0.61, converting to a χ^2 of 65.88 (significant at the 0.1 level with $df = 9$). Coefficients were calculated separately across newspapers, radio newscasts, and television news broadcasts, yielding the following results:

	Coefficient	χ^2	Significance
Across Newspapers	0.79	56.88	Sig. (0.1)
Across Radio	0.74	13.32	Sig. (0.5)
Across Television	0.56	10.08	Sig. (0.5)

These figures show a fairly close correspondence between patterns of attention to different types of subject matter across all media.

Table 7 gives an indication of the depth of the media's reporting of industrial action, showing the average length of items falling within this subject matter category, compared with items in other categories.

Table 5
Topics of Industrial Relations News by Papers and Programmes

		N.Z. Herald	Auckland Star	Dominion	Evening Post	Otago Daily Times	Evening Star	The Press	Christchurch Star	TOTAL Newspapers	Morning Report	Evening Report	TOTAL Radio	Television One	Television Two	TOTAL T.V.	TOTAL Main Media	Radio Avon
1.	No.	9	11	6	4	12	11	13	19	85	4	17	21	2	10	12	118	7
Industrial																		
Action	%	20.0	25.6	18.8	13.8	49.9	33.3	24.5	33.9	26.7	23.5	50.0	41.2	25.0	47.6	41.3	29.6	41.2
	c.cm	152.0	266.0	162.1	106.5	230.4	198.3	360.2	449.0	1924.5							1924.5	
	secs										191	709	900	91	726	817	1717	132
2	No.	7	1	3	4	2	2	4	5	28	2	7	9	3	2	5	42	2
Negotiation	%	15.6	2.4	9.4	13.8	7.1	6.1	7.5	8.9	8.8	11.8	20.6	17.7	37.5	9.5	17.2	10.6	11.8
	c.cm	199.5	8.8	70.6	152.1	34.0	28.4	109.8	73.7	676.9							676.9	
	secs										42	272	314	167	150	317	631	39
3	No.	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Economic	%	0	2.4	0	0	0	0	1.9	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0
Context	c.cm	-	273.3	-	-	-	-	106.2	-	379.5							379.5	
	secs										-	-	-	-	-	-		-
4	No.	4	2	4	5	5	4	7	4	35	2	3	5	1	0	1	41	1
Political	%	8.9	4.7	12.5	17.2	17.9	12.1	13.2	7.1	11.0	11.8	8.8	9.8	12.5	0	3.4	10.3	5.9
Action/ Statements	c.cm	121.2	103.7	162.3	109.6	161.0	222.6	171.1	132.0	1183.5							1183.5	
	secs										219	73	292	128	-	128	420	25
5	No.	2	2	4	1	1	1	2	1	14	4	0	4	0	0	0	18	2
State	%	4.4	4.7	12.5	3.4	3.6	3.0	3.8	1.8	4.4	23.5	0	7.8	0	0	0	4.6	4.8
Agency	c.cm	40.6	27.1	42.3	12.7	10.7	10.8	30.9	41.3	216.4							216.4	
	secs										182	-	182	-	-	-	182	17

Continued

(Table 5 - Continued)

		N.Z. Herald	Auckland Star	Dominion	Evening Post	Otago Daily Times	Evening Star	The Press	Christchurch Star	TOTAL Newspapers	Morning Report	Evening Report	TOTAL Radio	Television One	Television Two	TOTAL T.V.	TOTAL Main Media	Radio Avon
6	No.	12	13	10	6	4	10	17	18	90	2	5	7	2	7	9	106	2
Union	%	26.7	30.3	31.3	20.7	14.3	30.3	32.1	32.1	28.3	11.8	14.7	13.7	25.0	33.3	31.0	26.6	11.8
Action/ Statements	c.cm	384.7	421.2	297.2	304.8	139.9	274.6	515.9	687.1	3025.4							3025.4	
	secs										148	249	397	134	586	720	1117	40
7	No.	8	9	4	4	2	3	3	6	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	0
Employers'	%	17.8	21.0	12.5	13.8	7.1	9.1	5.0	10.7	12.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.8	0
Action/ Statements	c.cm	410.8	332.7	101.8	179.0	60.5	113.4	31.2	241.8	1472.1							1472.1	
	secs										-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	No.	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	2	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	1
Work and Conditions	%	2.2	7.0	0	0	0	3.0	5.7	3.6	3.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.5	5.9
	c.cm	19.2	44.2	-	-	-	31.5	63.9	30.8	189.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	189.6	
	secs										-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
9	No.	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	3	0	2	2	8	1
Industrial Develop- ments	%	4.4	0	0	3.4	0	0	0	0	1.0	11.8	2.9	5.9	0	9.5	6.9	2.0	5.9
	c.cm	16.0	0	0	52.4	0	0	0	0	68.4							68.4	
	secs										168	148	316	-	168	168	484	19
10	No.	0	1	1	4	2	1	3	1	13	1	1	2	0	0	0	15	1
Others	%	0	2.4	3.1	13.8	7.1	3.0	5.7	1.8	4.1	5.9	2.9	3.9	0	0	0	3.8	5.9
	c.cm	0	57.5	34.0	204.9	138.1	38.3	86.3	61.7	620.8							620.8	
	secs										229	55	284	-	-	-	284	25

Table 6

Sub-Analysis of Subject Matter - Number and Percentage
Distribution of Items within each Descriptive Category

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION OF ITEM	MAIN MEDIA		AVON	
		No.	%	No.	%
Industrial Action	Simple ongoing action	24	20.3	5	71.4
	Negotiations (ongoing action)	21	17.8	1	14.3
	Impending action	16	13.6	1	14.3
	Negotiations/Statements (impending action)	17	14.4	-	-
	Returns to work	35	29.7	-	-
	Stressing effects	3	2.5	-	-
	Industrial action in general	1	0.8	-	-
	Past action	1	0.8	-	-
Negotiations	Wages and allowances	40	95.2	1	50
	Conditions of work	4	9.5	1	50
	Collapse of negotiations	3	7.1	1	50
	Mentioning favourable progress	16	38.1	-	-
	Mentioning unwillingness to agree	5	11.9	-	-
	Union-Employer negotiations	9	21.4	2	100
	Union-Government negotiations	33	78.6	-	-
	Defining situation as stalemate	4	9.5	-	-
Economic Context	Dealing with role of third party	2	4.8	-	-
	Economic well-being of country	1	50.0	-	-
Political Action/ Statements	Unemployment	1	50.0	-	-
	By Government	32	78.0	1	100
	By Opposition	8	19.5	-	-
State Agency	By others	1	2.4	-	-
	Wage determining bodies	7	38.9	2	100
Union Action/ Statements	Others	11	61.1	-	-
	F.O.L. or Trade Union movement	20	18.9	-	-
	Unions	86	81.1	2	100
Work and Conditions	Intra-union disturbances	13	12.3	2	100
	Health and/or Safety	2	20.0	-	-
	Hours	-	-	-	-
	Holidays	-	-	-	-
	Others	8	80.0	1	100

Table 7

Average Length of Items on Industrial Action Compared with that of Items in Other Subject Matter Categories

	Industrial Action (c.cm/secs)	Others (c.cm/secs)
Newspapers	22.6 c.cm	33.5 c.cm
Radio	42.9 s	59.5 s
Television	68.1 s	78.4 s
Radio Avon	18.9 s	17.7 s

4.2.1 Reliability

Reliability for the coding of items according to their main topic of subject matter was estimated by the method outlined in Chapter Three. The final inter-coder agreement arrived at was 0.93 (i.e. perfect agreement on 93% of occasions). Scott's formula was used to correct for expected agreement due to chance, and this yielded an inter-coder reliability estimate of 0.91. Bearing in mind that this was achieved by getting another coder to classify the first two lines of items only, this is an exceptionally high figure.

4.3 CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Items falling within the category of 'Industrial Action' were further analysed according to the types of causes and effects given by the media for the reported event or situation. Table 8 shows the percentage

frequency with which causal explanations fell within eight categories of cause.

Table 8
Percentage Distribution of Different Types
of Causes given in Reports of Industrial Action

	News papers	Radio	T.V.	Total	Avon
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Dissatisfaction with pay, wages, etc.	31.1	42.1	43.8	34.9	60.0
2. Opposition to employer action or policy	31.1	-	18.8	23.9	-
3. Opposition to Government action or policy	4.1	-	-	2.8	-
4. Dissatisfaction with working conditions	25.7	36.8	12.5	25.7	40.0
5. Simple failure to agree, stalemate	-	-	6.3	0.9	-
6. Actions of other groups	2.7	-	-	1.8	-
7. Union instructions	5.4	10.5	6.3	6.4	-
8. Employer action	-	10.5	12.5	3.7	-

Table 9 shows the numbers of these causes as either 'elaborated' or 'unelaborated' for all media.

Table 9
Numbers of 'Elaborated' and 'Unelaborated' Causes

	Elaborated	Unelaborated
Newspapers	31	43
Radio	10	9
Television	10	6
TOTAL	51	58
Avon	1	4

In similar fashion, the percentage frequency of effects falling within a number of categories of reported effect, for all media, is presented in Table 10. Table 11 shows the average number of causes per item and effects per item for all papers and programmes. These figures do not allow for those items not listing causes or effects. The numbers of items not giving causes and effects for the reported event are expressed as a percentage of the total number of items in the 'Industrial Action' category in Table 12.

Table 10
Percentage Distribution of Different Types of
Effects given in Reports of Industrial Action

	News papers	Radio	T.V.	Total	Avon
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Hardship to workers and families	1.2	-	9.1	2.5	-
2. Economic hardship for businesses	6.2	-	4.5	5.1	-
3. Inconvenience to consumers, public	7.4	20.0	9.1	9.3	25.0
4. Layoffs, suspensions	3.7	-	-	2.5	-
5. Change in indus- trial practice	1.2	-	9.1	2.5	-
6. Legal action	2.5	-	-	1.7	-
7. General economic effect	1.2	-	-	0.9	25.0
8. Specific, quanti- fied production loss	16.1	-	9.1	12.7	-
9. General disruption	49.4	73.3	59.1	54.2	50.0
10. Little or no effect	6.2	6.7	-	5.1	-
11. Physical danger	3.7	-	-	2.5	-
12. Government intervention	1.2	-	-	0.9	-

Table 11
Average Numbers of Causes and Effects per Item

	Causes per Item	Effects per Item
N.Z. Herald	0.67	1.00
Auckland Star	1.27	0.91
Dominion	0.67	0.17
Evening Post	1.25	0.50
Otago Daily Times	0.67	1.00
Evening Star	0.64	1.36
The Press	1.15	1.23
Christchurch Star	0.79	0.84
TOTAL	0.87	0.95
Morning Report	1.00	1.00
Evening Report	0.88	0.65
TOTAL	0.90	0.71
Television One	1.00	1.00
Television Two	1.40	2.00
TOTAL	1.33	1.83
Radio Avon	0.71	1.00

Table 12
Numbers of Items stating no Cause, no Effect,
and No Cause or Effect

	No Cause	No Effect	No Cause or Effect
Newspapers	17 (20.0%)	38 (44.7%)	5 (5.9%)
Radio	3 (14.3%)	4 (19.0%)	1 (4.8%)
Television	1 (8.3%)	3 (25.0%)	-
TOTAL	21 (17.8%)	45 (38.1%)	6 (5.1%)
Radio Avon	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (14.3%)

SP

4.3.1 Reliability

Reliability for this section of the analysis was assessed by recoding items twelve weeks after the initial coding. Where the recoding of the item differed from that originally obtained, this fact was noted, and thus a measure of agreement between the two codings computed. For the 'causes' section of the analysis, perfect agreement was obtained on all but four occasions. This yielded a figure of agreement, and thus an estimate of coding reliability over time, of 0.97. It should perhaps be noted that disagreement occurred solely with items from television news, possibly due to the fact that the analysis was performed on the actual videotape recordings, rather than from written transcripts, as was the case for radio news. This would be expected to make the coding process slightly more difficult for such items.

Recoding items according to the effects reported for the action, there was disagreement on three items, two of which were from television news. This gave an agreement figure of 0.98.

4.4 PARTICIPANTS AND SPOKESMEN

Table 13 presents the number and percentage of items in which the various participant types appeared, for the main media and for Radio Avon. Table 14 shows these figures for the main media: newspapers, radio, and

television. A record was also kept of participant types appearing in newspaper headlines, and Table 15 gives the frequency of appearance of the main participant types in this context, along with the percentage of the total number of headlines, in which they appeared. For items in the subject matter category 'Industrial Action', the frequency of appearance of participant types in this type of news item was compared with that of those appearing in the whole sample of news items, and this comparison, for the main participant types, is presented in Table 16. As an estimate of the range of participant types appearing in industrial relations news, the average number of participant types per item was calculated for each paper and programme, and these figures are shown in Table 17.

Table 13
Participant Types Appearing in
Industrial Relations News Items

PARTICIPANT TYPE	MAIN MEDIA		RADIO AVON	
	No. Items	%	No. Items	%
Workers	278	69.7	15	88.2
Unions	278	69.7	8	47.1
Federation of Labour	65	16.3	-	-
Employers (Specific)	99	24.8	4	23.5
Employers (General)	55	13.8	-	-
Employers Associations	45	11.3	2	11.8
Directors	12	3.0	-	-
Shareholders	1	0.3	-	-
Government	185	46.4	3	17.6
Opposition	9	2.3	-	-
State Bodies	98	24.6	3	17.6
Civil Servants	34	8.5	1	5.9
Retailers	7	1.8	-	-
Public	24	6.0	1	5.9
Interest Groups	40	10.0	1	5.9
Local Bodies	20	5.0	1	5.9
Experts	6	1.5	-	-

Table 14
Participant Types Appearing in News Items
from the Main Media

PARTICIPANT TYPES	NEWSPAPERS	RADIO	TELEVISION
	% Items	% Items	% Items
Workers	67.4	76.5	82.8
Unions	69.6	62.7	82.8
Federation of Labour	16.0	15.7	20.7
Employers (Specific)	25.7	17.6	27.6
Employers (General)	14.1	13.7	10.3
Employers Associations	12.2	3.9	13.8
Directors	3.4	-	3.4
Shareholders	0.3	-	-
Government	45.5	52.9	44.8
Opposition	2.8	-	-
State Bodies	27.3	15.7	10.3
Civil Servants	8.5	7.8	10.3
Retailers	1.9	-	3.4
Public	5.3	9.8	6.9
Interest Groups	8.8	21.6	3.4
Local Bodies	5.3	2.0	6.9
Experts	1.6	2.0	-

Table 15

Participant Types Appearing in Newspaper Headlines

PARTICIPANT TYPE	No. of Appearances in Headlines	% Total No. of Headlines
Workers	74	23.2
Unions	26	8.2
Federation of Labour	10	3.1
Employers (Specific)	6	1.9
Employers (General)	10	3.1
Employers Associations	-	-
Directors	-	-
Shareholders	-	-
Government	17	5.3
Opposition	4	1.3
State Bodies	1	0.3
Civil Servants	3	0.9
Retailers	2	0.6
Public	3	0.9
Interest Groups	5	1.6
Local Bodies	1	0.3
Experts	-	-

Table 16
Participants and Spokesmen Appearing
in Reports of Industrial Action

	% Items
Workers	86.4
Unions	62.7
Government	28.0
Employers or Managers	32.2
State Bodies	16.1
Employers Associations	17.8
Interest Groups	15.3

Table 17
Average Number of Participant Types per
Item for all Papers and Programmes

	Participant Types per Item
N.Z. Herald	3.27
Auckland Star	3.47
Dominion	3.09
Evening Post	3.00
Otago Daily Times	3.25
Evening Star	3.30
The Press	2.77
Christchurch Star	3.23
TOTAL	3.17
Morning Report	3.18
Evening Report	2.94
TOTAL	3.02
Television One	2.88
Television Two	3.48
TOTAL	3.31
Radio Avon	2.29

4.4.1 Quotations

For those participants quoted in news items, either directly or indirectly, a record was kept of the participant type and the number of times quoted. Table 18 shows the number of times a participant type was quoted, and the percentage of the total number of items in which these participants were thus reported, on average. Note that these figures represent actual numbers of quotations. Table 19 presents these results for the main media separately.

Where an item was based, or 'hung', on a statement, this was noted, and the numbers of such items along with the participant type from which the statement originated are shown in Table 20. Radio Avon is not represented in these results, as that medium produced only one instance of an item being so based on a statement.

Table 21 shows the number of interviews given to main participant types on radio and television news. Radio Avon is once again not represented, as it did not interview anyone in an industrial relations context during the sample period. The average lengths of such interviews were calculated as 119 seconds for radio, and 45 seconds for television.

Table 18
Spokesmen, or Participant Types quoted,
in Industrial Relations News Items

SPOKESMEN	MAIN MEDIA		RADIO AVON	
	No. Quotes	% Items Quoted*	No. Quotes	% Items Quoted*
Workers	14	4	-	-
Union Officials	202	51	4	24
Federation of Labour	36	9	-	-
Specific Employers	48	12	2	12
Employers Assn.	47	12	1	6
Directors	12	3	-	-
Government	63	16	-	-
Opposition	8	2	-	-
Civil Servants	27	7	-	-
Retailers	3	1	-	-
Public	1	-	-	-
Interest Groups	11	3	1	6
Local Body Members	12	3	-	-
Experts	7	2	-	-

*(On average)

Table 19
Spokesmen Featuring in News Items
from the Main Media

SPOKESMEN	NEWSPAPERS % Items Quoted (Average)	RADIO % Items Quoted (Average)	TELEVISION % Items Quoted (Average)
Workers	3	3	7
Union Officials	51	33	76
Federation of Labour	6	14	28
Specific Employers	13	5	14
Employers Associations	14	-	14
Directors	.3	-	3
Government	15	16	21
Opposition	3	-	-
Civil Servants	7	4	7
Retailers	1	-	-
Public	0.3	-	-
Interest Groups	3	6	-
Local Body Members	3	2	3
Experts	2	-	-

Table 20
 Number of Items 'Hung' on Statements
 by Various Spokesmen, for all Media

SPOKESMEN	NO. ITEMS
Workers	1
Union Officials	45
Federation of Labour	9
Specific Employers	13
Employers Associations	10
Directors	5
Government	26
Opposition	4
Civil Servants	8
Retailers	3
Interest Groups	2
Local Bodies	3

Table 21
Number of Interviews Given to Main
Participant Types on Radio and Television

SPOKESMEN	RADIO	TELEVISION	TOTAL
Workers	-	1	1
Union Officials	6	11	17
Federation of Labour	2	2	4
Employers Associations	-	3	3
Government	3	3	6
Interest Groups	3	-	-

4.4.2 Characterisation

Table 22 gives the frequency of characterisation of the main participant types by newspapers, radio and television. During the period of the study, Radio Avon did not apply such adjectives to any participants in its reports of industrial relations. Looking at the types of adjectives used more than once by the media, it was found that workers were seen to be militant (2 times), frustrated (2), confident (2), and unhappy (2). Unions and the Federation of Labour were described as concerned (5), unruly (5), fragmented (4), unhappy (4), split (3), and firm (3), and employers and their associations as militant (6), disturbed (4), concerned (4), worried (3), steadfast (3), and uncompromising (3). The Government, on the other hand, was presented as being hopeful (4),

intrigued (3), surprised (3), and concerned (3).

Table 22
Frequency of Characterisation of Main
Participant Types by the Main Media

PARTICIPANT TYPES	NEWSPAPERS ¹	RADIO	TELEVISION
Workers	20 (2)	1	2
Unions and FOL	44 (4)	5	4
Employers and Employers Assns.	25 (4)	6	1
Government	23 (-)	4	4

¹ Figures in parentheses represent the number of characterisations occurring in Newspaper headlines.

4.4.3 Reliability

Reliability was assessed for the coding of items according to participant type featured by recoding after a lapse of nine weeks. In this case, full agreement between the two codings was achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 MAIN MEDIA RESULTS

5.1.1 Amount of Coverage

It is apparent that industrial relations is an area which receives a good deal of attention from the news media in this country. Notwithstanding the lack of any happenings of great significance on this front, the eight newspapers under investigation produced a total of around 17 complete broadsheets of industrial relations news over the ten days, at an average of just over two per paper. Radio and television produced similarly large amounts, with totals of 45 and 36 minutes respectively. As expected, those papers and programmes with the greatest available news space produced the most of this type of news, with the exception of Morning Report. This is possibly due to the fact that Morning Report tends to have a large overseas and sports news content, while its counterpart, Evening Report, tends to focus more on events of local significance. Looking at the average daily industrial relations news contents for the various media, it can be seen that the likelihood of audience contact

with at least some industrial relations news on a given day is high. The press averaged a daily content of 979 column centimetres over the ten days, with three newspapers having an average daily content of over one quarter of a broadsheet. Radio New Zealand programmes together produced close to four and a half minutes daily, with television producing a daily average of over three minutes of industrial relations news.

As an indication of the news value attached to industrial relations by media professionals, the newspapers under study here devoted between one and a half and two and a half per cent of their total news content to industrial relations. By comparison, radio and television both spent around five and a half per cent of their running time on this subject, indicating similar judgements on the part of broadcasting editors as to the newsworthiness of industrial relations. Bearing in mind the fact that restrictions on available news space force broadcasting editors to be far more circumspect in their selection of content than their press counterparts, it appears that industrial relations is a topic considered extremely newsworthy by those responsible for the selection of news content.

Thus, considering the size of the audience reached by those media represented here, the results of this section of the analysis indicate that sufficiently large amounts of industrial relations news reach the general public daily for such information to be regarded as an

important factor in the shaping of public consciousness in this area.

5.1.2 Subject Matter

As with other studies of this type, the results of this investigation indicate that the predominant subject matter of industrial relations news concerns industrial action, though perhaps not to such a large extent. Overall, 29.6% of main media items addressed themselves to this topic, a figure considerably lower than those obtained by Hartmann (1976) and Maharey (1977). Perhaps the best possible explanation for this comparatively low level of attention to this type of subject matter is that the period covered by the analysis was one containing relatively few instances of industrial action. It has already been noted that the period immediately prior to the analysis saw the announcement of a six per cent General Wage Order. It seems reasonable to expect that such an announcement would be followed by a period of relative 'quiet' while parties reassessed their positions. Furthermore, many unions may have been careful not to create disputes related to wage demands at this time owing to the possibility of obtaining greater concessions outside of the formal industrial relations machinery once free wage bargaining was reinstituted.

To some degree, the figure of 29.6% for the main media is misleading, owing to the number of newspapers in the sample. While the results show that only 26.7% of

newspaper items fell within the 'Industrial Action' category of subject matter, they also show that the broadcasting media devoted a far greater proportion of their coverage to this type of subject matter than did the press. In the case of both radio and television, around forty one per cent of items concerned this aspect of industrial relations. This does not necessarily indicate, however, that the broadcasting media paid greater attention to industrial action than did newspapers. A more likely explanation is that while all media reported those few disputes which did occur during this period, such reports accounted for a greater proportion of the broadcasting media's coverage, which is necessarily limited to a fewer number of items. Thus, this apparent difference may be merely the result of a relatively 'quiet' period of industrial relations combined with the restricted news space available to the broadcasting media.

The sub-analysis of items falling within the category 'Industrial Action' shows that the greatest number of such items were about returns to work, or the ending of action. This is partially accounted for by the intensive coverage given to the ending of the six month long Boilermakers' dispute on the BNZ site in Wellington. However, as Morley (1973) suggests, it may also reflect a tendency on the part of the media to regard the resumption of normal working relations as the issue above all else in dispute situations, regardless of the 'real' issues at

stake. As in the Hartmann (1976) study, a large proportion of items in this category were simple reports of ongoing action, merely reporting the existence or continuance of the dispute. Altogether, around 41% of items on industrial action related to ongoing action. By comparison, 28% of items were about impending action. Only three items in this category addressed themselves solely to the effects of an instance of industrial action. One might have expected that, given the consistent finding in the research literature that the media tend to stress the effects of industrial action, this figure would be higher.

Negotiations, notwithstanding the important role they play in the process of industrial relations, were the subject of only 10.6% of items. This is not surprising for, although they occur far more frequently than instances of industrial action, they lack the same intrinsic newsworthiness. Note that this category did not include those items which were about negotiations over specific instances of industrial action. Almost all the negotiations making news at this time were those concerning wages and allowances, or at least were reported as such, with only a modest 9.5% of items referring to conditions of work as a topic under negotiation. Furthermore, the picture painted of such negotiations was decidedly gloomy, with only 38% of such items making any reference to favourable progress of some kind. By way of contrast, 9.5% of items described the situation reported

as a 'stalemate', with a further 7.5% stating that the negotiations had collapsed or broken down. Unwillingness of the parties to agree or to negotiate was reported in 12% of items, with unions portrayed as the unwilling party on three out of five occasions. The majority of negotiations reported during this period were those occurring between parties in the public sector, and this is reflected in the finding that 78.6% of items related to negotiations between unions and the government. The frequency with which parties in the public sector are reported as being involved in negotiations may well mean that such parties are seen as possessing less militant attitudes than their counterparts in the private sector.

Of all the parties involved in industrial relations, the actions and statements of unions and their spokesmen make the news most often. This category was found to account for almost as many items as that relating to industrial action. A possible explanation for this finding is that, owing to the relatively low level of industrial action at this time, the media were compelled to look elsewhere for items of news value, and that the actions and statements of labour organisations were perceived as being the next most newsworthy aspect of industrial relations. Within this category, it is interesting to note that around twelve per cent of items were reports of intra-union squabbles. Morley (1973) has pointed out that news coverage tends to highlight inter-union aspects of disputes, and it appears that this

'sectionalism' is also highlighted in the reporting of activities within unions.

In contrast to those of labour organisations, the actions and statements of employers and their associations were the subject of news items on only 9.8% of occasions. Note that neither radio nor television carried any items of this type, so that this figure for the main media derives solely from the number of reports appearing in newspapers. Sad to state that the bulk of such reports were not concerned with 'every day' industrial relations, but related to a 'once-off' situation in which a small group of employers was trying to curry favour for its stand before the commission of inquiry into the heavy engineering industry. In more normal circumstances one might expect fewer news items of this type. The results of Hartmann (1976) and Maharey (1977) tend to support this conclusion.

The actions and statements of government and of others in the political arena appeared as news items with about the same frequency as those of employer groups. This reflects the extent to which the government is a major participant in industrial relations in this country, both as an employer in an increasingly large public sector, and as the body responsible for the statutory framework which is so much an integral part of this country's industrial relations system. It also reflects the importance of government as a prime source of information. However, within this category, little in the way

of balance appears to have been achieved, with the government the subject of 78% of items and the opposition party the main subject in only 19.5% of items. It is also surprising to note the almost complete lack of diversity in reported political comment and activity. Only one item in this category concerned a political identity outside of the two main parties.

It becomes increasingly apparent that, while a few topics in industrial relations receive a large amount of coverage, many areas of importance are passed over by the news media. The economic context of industrial relations is one such topic, accounting for only two items out of a total of 399 presented by the main media. Although, in these times of high inflation and economic uncertainty, economic considerations are some of the major factors shaping the nature of ongoing industrial relations, this fact does not appear to be overtly recognised by the news media. It is, however, possible that the massive coverage given to the economic effects of the General Wage Order in the previous week may have contributed to a lack of items of this type at this time. Another area receiving surprisingly little coverage relates to the actions and statements of state bodies involved in industrial relations. The 4.6% of items dealing with this area does not in any way reflect the extent to which such bodies are an integral part of the industrial relations scene in this country. Work and conditions and industrial developments were topics similarly under-reported by the news media at

this time. When one considers the wealth of evidence that industrial accidents cause far greater losses in production and far more suffering than do industrial disputes, it is disappointing to note that topics such as industrial safety appear so infrequently in the news.

Thus, the media present a picture of what is happening in industrial relations only in a very selective sense. The bulk of industrial relations news is directed at instances of industrial action and at the actions and statements of organised labour, while other areas of equal if not greater importance fail to get the coverage they deserve. This is not to say that the media are actively ignoring such areas. A more likely explanation, also suggested by Maharey (1977), is that the media accept as news only those issues or topics which are brought to their attention, either by their association with important and well established news sources, or by the ability of the issue to attract such attention of its own accord. Topics such as the economic context of industrial relations, industrial developments, and work and conditions which lack the impetus of topics such as industrial action to attract the attention of the news media, fail to become news. To some extent criticism may be levelled at those parties to industrial relations who are regarded by the media as important news sources for not bringing such issues more to their attention. There appears to be a marked unwillingness on the part of the news media to investigate issues off their own bat, and

as a result they fall short of presenting a full and adequate picture of industrial relations as it occurs in the 'real' world. To some extent radio and television are forced into this position by the very nature of those media, with restrictions of time and format tying them to reports of simple visible events and happenings. However, newspapers are far more suited to an in-depth presentation of industrial relations news and are thus not so easily excused in this respect.

One of the more disturbing aspects of the findings in this section of the analysis concerns the marked degree to which patterns in the coverage of the various topics within industrial relations are the same for all papers and programmes. Thus, whichever news medium a reader or listener is exposed to, the same basic picture of the industrial relations scene appears. This state of affairs cannot but help to reinforce audience perceptions of the news as a true reflection of the nature of events in the outside world, and thus heighten the credibility of the information proffered by the news media.

5.1.3 Causes and Effects

As was the case in Hartmann's (1976) study, the most commonly stated cause for industrial action in items under study here was a statement of workers' dissatisfaction with wages and allowances, accounting for 34.9% of all causes given. This was followed by dissatisfaction

with working conditions (27.7%), and opposition to employer action or policy (23.9%). The category 'Union instructions', which contained statements that the dispute had arisen because a union had ordered it accounted for 6.4% of all causes, and opposition to government action or policy accounted for 2.8% of causes. The most striking aspect of these results is that only around six per cent of causes saw industrial action as being caused by groups other than workers or unions. Three main causal categories were used by the media, and all of these related to the actions and attitudes of workers and their representatives. Philo and Hewitt (1976) have noted that many of the news media's causal explanations of disputes amount in effect to 'blaming the workforce', and it appears that this country's news media are no different in this respect. It is not difficult to see how this situation may arise. The most common form of reported industrial action is the strike, which is essentially a withdrawal of labour by a body of workers, generally at the suit of those organisations to which the workers belong. Thus, on the surface, the reason for the existence of the situation reported by the media is the action of workers in stopping work. The distinction between the responsibility for the form of the action and the responsibility for the actual occurrence of that action is one that the news media do not seem to make.

Throughout the media coverage, the issue of wages

emerges as one of the prime issues in industrial relations. One gains the impression from the media that industrial relations is largely about one side, workers and unions, trying to get more money, and another side, employers and government, trying to stop them. Not only is industrial action presented as primarily due to workers wanting higher wages or greater allowances, but negotiations are presented as centering almost entirely upon monetary issues. Furthermore, a large proportion of the state bodies reported as being involved in industrial relations are those who are operating in the area of wage determination. While it is the case that, in times of high inflation, the protection of wage levels is one of organised labour's greatest priorities, it is fair to state that it is not its sole area of activity. The media, by focussing so heavily on activities in this area, risk suggesting that such groups are motivated by monetary considerations alone, giving rise to the impression of greed.

The superficiality of the new's media's analysis of the causes of industrial action is striking. Only eight categories accounted for the whole range of causal explanation utilised by the main media, with the vast majority of these falling within only three categories. Out of a total of 109 causes forwarded by the main media, over fifty per cent of these were only one sentence long, or 'unelaborated' causes. Thus, in the majority of cases, no attempt was made to explain the reasons for a dispute

in any degree of detail. This type of explanation leaves the audience to inject their own meaning into the causes of the reported event, inviting the intrusion of stereotypes people have about such action. Noticeably, the press were most guilty in this respect, producing a greater proportion of 'unelaborated' causes than the broadcasting media. This is disturbing in view of the fact that the press is the medium best suited to an in-depth discussion of the issues involved in disputes. Limitations in the news media's causal analysis of disputes are also reflected in figures showing the average numbers of causes presented per item. Newspapers averaged 0.87 causes, radio 0.90 causes, and television averaged 1.33 causes per item. The causes of industrial action are invariably several and complex. The dispute which has a single cause and one which can be adequately explained in a single sentence is extremely rare indeed. Yet, on average, the media in this study presented less than one cause per item, with the majority of these explanations occurring in the space of one sentence. The probable effect of such a lack of in-depth causal explanation is that media audiences are likely to judge the issues at stake in industrial action as trivial. By extension, unions and workers, consistently portrayed as causing such action, are likely to be seen as irresponsible and petty.

While the media neglect the causes of industrial action they appear to examine the implications of such

action in slightly more detail. This study identified twelve major categories of effect as opposed to only eight categories of cause. The largest of these contained non-specific references to some form of general disruption or drop in the efficiency of an enterprise. This category included such statements as "the strike left the wharves idle and several ships were delayed." Overall, 54.2% of stated effects were of this type, showing that the media tend to stress the disruptive aspects of disputes. As Morley (1973) notes, the media characteristically portray disputes and strikes as chaos-causing events. A specific, quantified reference to a loss in production featured more than four times less frequently. Inconvenience to the public or consumer accounted for 9.3% of effects, a figure which is surprisingly low if indeed the media do interpret their role in a dispute as representing the public interest against the sectional interests of union and employer. It is interesting to note that 5.1% of effects fell into the 'little or no effect' category, showing that the news media will sometimes underline what they see as the futility of the action. This category in fact featured more prominently than that relating to the hardship of workers and their families. Thus, while the media present workers and unions as causing industrial action, such action is not generally presented as affecting these groups. It is only others who are seen to be affected by the action.

The effects of industrial action are seemingly always bad. Never was industrial action seen to have positive consequences, such as the improvement of working conditions, or the restoration of realistic wage levels. It follows that workers and unions, who are generally presented as being responsible for such situations, are responsible for the negative consequences which are always seen to arise. The media thus invite a negative evaluation of such groups.

Both newspapers and television were found to present slightly more effects than causes per item. The reverse held for radio coverage of disputes. In 17.8% of items, no cause was given for the reported action, and in 38.1% of items, no effects were given. It would appear, then, that whereas effects were given in fewer items than were causes, when they were given, they were discussed in greater detail. Over five per cent of items presented neither cause nor effect, stressing the shallowness of the media's analysis of industrial action. This is also evidenced by the finding that items on industrial action were on average noticeably shorter than items in any other subject matter category.

5.4.1 Participants and Spokesmen

Bearing in mind that industrial action is generally reported as resulting from the activities of workers and their representatives, the results so far have shown that over half of all the news items in the period

covered by the analysis were directed at the actions and statements of such groups. In the light of this observation, it is hardly surprising to note that workers and unions are the participant types who feature most prominently in the body of industrial relations news. The only participant type to appear nearly as frequently was government who featured in 46.4% of items as opposed to 69.7% of items for both unions and workers. By comparison with these three participant types, employers, their associations, and all other parties to industrial relations appeared hardly at all. A similar onesidedness was observed in the frequency of quotations of participant types.

Union officials were quoted, on average, in 51% of items. Government on the other hand was only reported in this manner in 16% of items and employers and their associations in 12% of items. The low number of quotations coming from workers can be explained in terms of a tendency on the part of the media to prefer official to unofficial sources. Statements from union sources were also the basis of news items more frequently than those from any other participant type. Similarly, union spokesmen were given nearly three times as many interviews on radio and television as any other participant type. Employers were never interviewed in an industrial relations context. The pattern of predominance of union and workers in industrial relations news is continued in newspaper headlines, where workers appeared in 23.2% of items and unions in 8.2% of times. By comparison, government only

made the headlines in 5.3% of items and employer groups hardly ever. The findings on characterisation also show that union officials were the participant type who most often was described with the use of adjectives, and of particular interest are the types of adjective used. In general, more negative characteristics were associated with this participant type than any other. The finding that employers were most often characterised as 'militant' is slightly surprising, but can be attributed to the statements of union officials appearing before the commission of inquiry into the heavy engineering industry.

It was noticeable that participant types were featured and quoted in news items with approximately the same frequency in all papers and programmes. Furthermore, all three media were found to present a similar number of participant types in their reports, averaging around three per item. Traditionally, discussions of the manner in which the news media portray persons or groups centre around the question of 'bias'. However, as Hartmann (1976) is at pains to point out, in the context of a study such as this, the concept of 'bias' has a very limited explanatory value. The 'hard' quantitative style of this type of content analysis is not ideally suited to the detection of what is commonly regarded as 'bias'. Allegations of this nature would be better investigated by the 'softer', more qualitative, forms of content analysis which, for example, would look at what participants were quoted as saying, rather than how many times

they were quoted. Likewise, the question of bias would be better answered by looking at the phrasing of headlines featuring the various participant types, rather than counting how many times they appeared in this context. The problem also arises that when one looks for evidence of bias in the results of this study, the indications are ambiguous and inconclusive. The finding that unions and workers appear more frequently in the news than any other participant types could be taken to mean that the news media are biased with regard to access in favour of such groups. On the other hand, the finding that unions and workers are generally presented as having caused industrial action and its undesirable effects, and that such groups have negative characteristics applied to them more often than other participants, indicates bias in the reverse direction. Rather than using the traditional concept of bias, Hartmann (1976) suggests that the notion of 'differential legitimacy' in the news media's presentation of participants and their actions is of greater use in interpreting the results of this type of analysis, giving a fuller description of the broad framework of meaning in which the news media's coverage of industrial relations is organised. The exact nature of this 'differential legitimacy' is determined by examining the results of the analysis to see which actions, and by whom, are presented as legitimate, and which lacking in legitimacy, and what consequences are presented as following on from the actions of the various participants.

In view of the extent to which the results of this study are the same as those obtained by Hartmann, it is not surprising that a similar conclusion is reached as to the pattern of differential legitimation in the news media's presentation of industrial relations. Stated in broad terms, coverage appears to be organised in such a way as to accord less legitimacy to the actions of workers and their representatives than to the actions of other parties to industrial relations. Among the findings lending support to this interpretation is the observation that unions and workers are presented as being almost solely responsible for industrial action, or bad industrial relations, and for its effects, which are seen to be decidedly disruptive. Also, it is found that the media apply negative adjectives to unions far more often than to any other participant type, that unions are often presented as squabbling amongst themselves, and that they are most often presented as the unwilling party to negotiations. Interpreted in this light, the findings from the 'Participants and Spokesmen' part of the analysis begin to make more sense. That unions and workers appear in the news more often than any other participant type suggests that such groups may be regarded by the media as warranting more attention, which is in line with the view that the media perceive of their legitimacy as suspect. That union sources are quoted most frequently in industrial relations news may also indicate that, because of their dubious legitimacy, these people are

called upon by the media to justify their actions. Alternatively, it may be that the media tend to place the union version of events in quotes, and not in the main body of the news, because of what is seen as the doubtful validity of information obtained from such sources.

The reasons for the apparent existence of differential legitimation in the presentation of parties and their actions in industrial relations are not apparent from the results of this investigation, but it may well be that they lie in the influence of the political, social, and economic environment in which the media are forced to operate. This is a possibility which was raised in the literature review and one which requires separate investigation. It should be noted at this stage that the fact of differential legitimation is not exactly proved by these results, but merely seems the most likely explanation in the circumstances. However, in that it is the sole interpretation that seems to adequately fit the findings, it must be given serious consideration.

RADIO AVON

The relatively small size of the sample of news programmes from this source makes it difficult to arrive at any detailed conclusions about the nature of industrial

relations news as presented by Radio Avon. However, it is apparent that, with broadcasts averaging only around five minutes in length, Radio Avon presents a far more superficial analysis of industrial relations than its counterparts in the main media, with items averaging only thirty seconds in length. The brevity of such reports is also reflected in the findings that this medium presented a far greater proportion of 'unelaborated' causes in its reports of industrial action than any of the main media, that a more limited range of causes and effects were featured, and that a smaller number of different participant types was used. It is interesting to note that Radio Avon did not characterise any participant types in its reports.

While there were these differences, the results show that, in broad terms, the patterns observed in the Radio Avon coverage are very similar to those observed in the main media coverage. This is surprising, for a number of reasons. First, Radio Avon is a privately-owned radio station with an audience largely confined to the Christchurch area, in which it must compete for listeners with a number of other 'popular' stations. Whereas the National Programme has total financial backing from the Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Avon, with its large dependency on advertising revenue, must to a large extent attract and hold listeners in order to survive. One would thus expect that the output of such a station would be geared more towards perceived public interest, and that this would be reflected in the content of its

news programmes, with perceived consumer interest acting as a prime determinant of programme content. Second, Radio Avon lacks the resources of the larger media organisations. Particularly in terms of the size of its news-gathering staff, this station is at a marked disadvantage when compared with the Radio New Zealand network and the other media organisations.

However, in all the major areas of the analysis, the type of coverage afforded industrial relations by Radio Avon is essentially the same as that given by the main media outlets. Noticeably, the same pattern of attention to topics of subject matter was observed in both cases. Likewise, major participant types appeared, and were quoted, in a similar proportion of items. Items on industrial action, when analysed, showed that the same major categories of cause and effect dominated the analysis of this type of event both on Radio Avon and in the main media. The overall amount of industrial relations news appearing on Radio Avon was calculated at 10.3% of total non-advertising space, which is a very similar amount to that appearing on Evening Report, indicating similar judgements as to the newsworthiness of industrial relations in both programmes. Over the ten days of the study, Radio Avon produced enough of this type of news to fill an entire news broadcast, which is also consistent with the findings for the main media.

5.3 UNIFORMITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE

Throughout this discussion, attention has been drawn to the finding that all the media in the present study appeared to present industrial relations news in a very similar manner. This uniformity of coverage suggests that, on the whole, newsmen in all media hold similar views as to what constitutes both the form and the subject matter of items of news. Another possible explanation of this perceived uniformity in the news media's treatment of industrial relations may be the extent to which items originate from the same news agencies. For example, a cursory examination of newspaper coverage revealed that over half the total of industrial relations news items appearing in this medium were based upon New Zealand Press Association reports. Though appearing in different papers under different headlines, and varying with respect to how much of the report was reprinted, the basic content and the manner in which it was phrased appeared to remain the same across all papers. Another factor, which may bear upon the uniformity of the press coverage at least, concerns the increasing monopoly ownership of media organisations. For example, both the Wellington papers are owned by the same concern, as are the Otago Daily Times and the Evening Star. The possibility thus arises of a similarity in editorial policy arising from factors of ownership and control. It should also be noted in this

respect that the majority of radio stations in this country are controlled by the same body, the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand.

That this uniformity exists is a matter for regret, for the public is thus deprived of the opportunity to choose between alternative views of the nature of the industrial relations process. This fact is likely to reinforce audience perceptions that the picture presented in the news is a true picture of reality, and one would thus expect the persuasive effects of media communications in this area to be increased. The suggestion that there exists a pattern of differential legitimation in the media's coverage of industrial relations underlines the disturbing nature of this state of affairs.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study provide further support for the findings of Hartmann (1976) as to the nature of the industrial relations news presented by the mass media. It is concluded that the vast majority of industrial relations news is directed at instances of overt conflict in this area, and at the activities of organised labour, particularly in what is seen as their causative relation to such bad industrial relations. By comparison, the bulk of normal, everyday industrial relations receives precious little coverage, as do the activities of other parties to this process. Thus, support is found for union complaints that the media overemphasise their involvement in dispute situations and tend to ignore the more constructive aspects of their work. Questions are also raised as to the interpretative framework within which media coverage in this area is organised, which seems to imply a distinctly negative evaluation of organised labour in general. Overall, the media's treatment of industrial relations is found to be lacking in depth, with an almost complete absence of investigative reporting. This is particularly noticeable

in the news media's analysis of dispute situations where attention generally centres on the surface implications, and ignores the reasons for and the issues at stake in such situations. The results also suggest that this type of industrial relations news presentation is characteristic of all the major news outlets in the country. The marked similarity between these findings and those obtained by Hartmann (1976) in the British context also suggests that similar patterns of coverage occur cross-nationally.

What the effects of these patterns of coverage are likely to be is a question that cannot really be answered here, in view of the essentially descriptive nature of this style of content analysis. Neither can the factors leading to such a presentation really be identified. While suggestions may be forwarded in these areas, such questions require separate investigation by separate means. However, it seems almost certain that the nature of industrial relations news as identified by this study will have some, possibly marked, effect on public perceptions in this area, given the dependency of the majority of the public on the mass media for much of their information on events in the outside world. The results of this analysis show that, essentially, all the information reaching the general public from such prime sources and concerning industrial relations, has the same basic characteristics, no matter what medium that public is exposed to. This lack of conflicting interpretations in

the large amount of information on industrial relations reaching the public from these sources cannot help but lead to such views passing virtually unchallenged into the consciousness of the majority of the populace.

There would appear, from the results of this analysis, to be many areas in the reporting of industrial relations which are ripe for improvement. One of these concerns the lack of attention given by the news media to normal industrial relations and to topics in this area which although lacking the attention-grabbing qualities of topics such as industrial action, illustrate core issues in employer-employee relations. In addition, the news media need to try and achieve a greater balance in their portrayal of the involvement of the various parties in industrial relations. In particular they need to examine those aspects of their coverage which over-emphasize the causative nature of organised labour involvement in bad industrial relations. In their reporting of dispute situations they also must attempt to present the issues at stake in greater detail and with far more care, so that the risks that the public will judge such issues as trivial and those involved in such situations as irresponsible, are minimised.

The results of this analysis also suggest that the problem for working class organisations lies not in the amount of coverage they receive at the hands of the media, but in the quality of that coverage. Thus, it is suggested that the strategy traditionally adopted by

unions as a perceived solution to public hostility towards their actions, namely, gaining greater coverage of those actions, may not be the correct approach to take. What appears to be required is for such organisations to force the media to pay greater attention to the more constructive aspects of their operations, and to bring about greater media understanding of the basic issues at stake in industrial relations. In essence, they must learn to negotiate the terms, not the amount of the coverage they receive.

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APPENDIX 1

Training of Additional Coder for Reliability Exercise

Firstly, the trainee coder was given the list of subject matter categories shown in Table 1, and its meaning explained in detail. Then she was asked to use this list to code three groups of 15 complete news items, selected at random from newspaper, radio, and television coverage. At the end of each trial, discrepancies between this and the original coding were discussed, and the reason for the original coding decisions explained to the trainee. The trainee was then asked to complete two 15 item coding exercises, using only the headline and first line of each item.

The test for reliability then consisted of the trained coder using the category list to categorise a list of 75 headlines and first lines according to their main topic of subject matter.